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ABSTRACT

A preliminary collaborative model is presented for the restructuring of the San Diego (California) city schools to implement diverse forms of assessment. It is assumed that collaboration among program evaluation, curriculum, and classroom teachers can foster reforms. Central office staff can enable and facilitate the implementation of different assessment practices. A collaborative model assumes that there is no one best form of assessment. Other hypotheses are that: the classroom teacher is the catalyst for change, and the teacher's role as collaborator and researcher must be enhanced. Empowering principals and teachers to attempt diverse teaching approaches and curricula while providing more rigorous school-based accountability requires a carefully planned approach. Restructuring schools in San Diego requires on-site change teams that provide a point where central office staff can foster interdependence with teachers. The model proposes that teams of central office staff and classroom teachers mutually address: (1) program evaluation; (2) testing services; (3) curricular development; (4) teacher flexibility in improving instruction; and (5) data collection. Program evaluation is the mainspring of the model. Two flowcharts and one table illustrate traditional and proposed models of school district program evaluation and services. (SLD)

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Program Evaluation, Curriculum, and Testing Services Implement Diverse Forms of Assessment in San Diego City Schools: A Proposed Collaboration Model

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Presented at the annual meeting of
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This paper presents a preliminary conceptualization of a collaboration model of school district central office services and restructuring schools in San Diego City Schools, to implement diverse forms of assessment. Diversified forms of assessment may include, but are not limited to, standardized multiple-choice tests, student or literacy portfolios, performance-based assessments, teacher and student journals, observations, interviews, and standardized achievement tests. The model postulates that collaboration between program evaluation, curriculum, and testing services and classroom teachers can foster desired reforms in classroom curriculum content, instructional practices, and assessment.

School reforms call for students to learn to integrate and use critical higher-order thinking skills. The Council of Chief State School Officers (Education Week, November 14, 1990) recently adopted a policy statement that "schools, previously asked to ensure the development of basic skills, are now required to teach all students a new, broad range of cognitive skills demanded by the changing contexts in which students live." Such skills are rooted in higher-order learning defined as complex reasoning processes that "yield multiple solutions; require interpretation and the use of multiple criteria; involve uncertainty and finding structure in apparent disorder; demand self-regulation of thinking processes; and, require considerable mental effort."

If higher-order thinking skills are valued learning outcomes, then diverse instructional and assessment systems are needed to yield these products. Wiggins (1989) contends that traditional norm-referenced achievement tests are inadequate models and incentives for eliciting exemplary student performance and reaching improved intellectual standards. He suggests that tests should become central experiences in learning. Diverse approaches to assessment can provide a medium for communicating to teachers and students the critical traits to look for in good writing, good

historical analysis, and good problem solving. The collaboration suggested by this model ensures that the curriculum will be part and parcel of assessment rather than being the driven by, as in the past.

Resnick and Resnick (1985) argue that school reforms should focus on upgrading curriculum--what is taught--and utilizing new forms of assessment which judge what is taught. If diverse approaches to assessment can be used to improve teaching and learning, then assisting classroom teachers to initiate multiple data collection approaches which actually measure desired outcomes such as higher-order thinking skills and result in improved teacher and student performance becomes a viable approach toward stimulating educational reforms.

The proposed model suggests central office staff can collaborate to become "enablers" and "facilitators" of schools' to implement diverse assessment practices. One assumption underlying the model is there is no one "best" form of assessment. Instead, a school accountability system should be designed to be compatible with "good" instruction, measure valued learning outcomes, and be aligned closely with the classroom curriculum. A second underlying assumption is that the classroom teacher is the focal point in bringing about change, and that the teacher's role as a collaborator and researcher in the change process must be enhanced.

Restructuring for Excellence

On June 26, 1990, San Diego City Schools Board of Education adopted a district mission statement along with goals and objectives that will guide district efforts for the next two years. "It is the mission of the San Diego City School district to educate all students in an integrated setting to become responsible, literate, thinking, and contributing members of a multicultural society through excellence in teaching and learning." District goals reflect commitment to restructuring for excellence in learning outcomes; teaching practices; integration; and, governance and collaboration.

The cultural and economic diversity found in San Diego City Schools, as a large urban district in California, a rapidly growing and changing state, challenges schools to better serve children. California demographics pertinent to education (Kirst, 1989) show that 23 percent of children are living in poverty, one out of every six children is born in another county, one out of every four children speaks a language other than English, and an increasingly larger disparity looms between advantaged and disadvantaged children. Statewide, dropout rates range as high as 40 percent in some districts and slightly more than 25 percent of high school graduates have taken courses permitting them to attend state universities.

In response to the identified need for districtwide changes to better prepare high school graduates for the work force and 21st century (Schools of the Future Commission, 1987), San Diego City Schools began a fundamental restructuring of schools by encouraging schools to "experiment with new approaches and organization that help all students attain productive futures". Five key principles were identified to guide and design schools of the future:

1. Empower individual schools on how best to teach students.
2. Encourage principals and teachers to work together managing schools.
3. Allocate resources, incentives, and recognition to enhance school-based authority.
4. Use diverse teaching approaches and curricula to respond to the diverse learning needs of students.
5. Provide more rigorous school-based accountability--with fair, equitable, and objective methods to evaluate school performance.

Drawing from organizational change theory, Scott (1981) conceives organizations as open systems comprised of loosely linked partially autonomous components, highly permeated by and interdependent with their environments. Between components within the organization, boundaries are established that must be

maintained to distinguish systems from their environment ("buffering"), while, at the same time, boundaries develop "certain thin places" where systems interact or become interdependent with other systems for specific needs and resources ("bridging"). While buffering maintains the status quo and ensures survival, bridging expands boundaries, forging interdependence and coordination among systems. Open systems are desirable and maintaining a balance of each strategy results in gains for the organization.

Within school district organizations, central office departments, schools, and classrooms buffer their expertise well and use, to a much lesser extent, successful "bridging" strategies. School building administrators and teachers are the dominant coalition whose work is most closely aligned with district goals. They tend not to seek program evaluation, testing, and curriculum services unless mandated. Program evaluators, curriculum designers, and testing personnel, as highly specialized support staff, are viewed as operating far removed from day-to-day realities of the school site. More often than not, requests for their services come from the superintendent and school board or external agencies such as state departments of education, not school principals or teachers.

What is desired in order to initiate school reform is a stronger collaboration between the direct services and support services of the district's organization. Schools cannot take on the task of improving teaching practices and learning outcomes alone as they do not possess all the necessary resources or expertise. Yet, teachers need to be involved as decision-makers in the school accountability process. Individual central offices cannot continue to operate removed from the needs of schools. The reform-oriented goals entailed in redesigning programs to better serve students can provide a junction, or "thin place" among boundaries, at which interdependence and coordination between program evaluation, curriculum, and testing services and classrooms can be fostered.

McCune (1988) suggests that the core of any organization is its values; goals and objectives flow from organizational values.

Restructuring organizations must begin with an examination of basic core values and goals. Within education core values have changed, and some important value shifts which must be confronted if students are to be adequately prepared for the future include the following:

- The nature of knowledge has changed and calls for very different approaches to curriculum and instruction.
- The purpose of education has changed, shifting from the teaching of content as the end of education to the teaching of content as a means of teaching students how to process information.
- Learning is a lifelong process.
- Learning is holistic including emotional, physical, and intellectual development.

If these value are accepted, then assumptions about desired learning outcomes and teaching practices need to become drastically different than those which are commonly held by educators. School reforms call for very different approaches to curriculum and instruction: an understanding that knowledge relates to higher-order thinking and cognitive skills which cut across content areas, not discrete subjects; awareness that knowledge and information are changing rapidly, renewal will be lifelong; and, an integrated and coordinated approach to human development. Curriculum design, program evaluation, and assessment of learning outcomes must be re-cast to fit a different mold.

Central to restructuring is a rethinking of expected learning outcomes for students, assessment standards, and classroom teacher roles. Miles Myers, executive director of the NCTE argues that teachers involved in restructuring experiments must be able to create new forms of assessment, collect and analyze data, and conduct experiments to test new forms of school organization (Education Week, December 12, 1990). If teachers are expected to teach complex reasoning processes, then desired outcomes and evidence of mastery should be reexamined. Teachers should have

increased involvement in selecting assessment measures and greater access to data collection processes. Assessment measures will need to be designed which assist students from different cultural backgrounds and abilities demonstrate what they know and can do. The classroom teacher needs to be a key player in the school accountability process, but in ways that allow for innovation and change to improve instructional practices.

Collaboration between Program Evaluation, Curriculum, and Testing with Classrooms

Empowering school principals and teachers to experiment with diverse teaching approaches and curricula while providing more rigorous school-based accountability methods requires a carefully planned approach to achieve real changes. While classroom teachers need to be allowed to pose novel questions and experiment with new instructional practices and curricula, they also are held accountable for improved student performance. As innovation and accountability are often incompatible concepts, pursuing different applications in curriculum/instruction, program evaluation, and testing services is necessary to support and validate innovations.

In traditional models, central office departments mostly relate directly with sites, typically school principals, using the classrooms as a source of data for accountability, program evaluation, student learning outcomes, and other information. Central office departments obtain, analyze, and report information to district, community, and other funding agencies primarily and, then, secondarily relay information back to the school site principal. These data are rarely systematically used for program revisions and reforms by classroom teachers. Program evaluation, curriculum, and testing services are seldom an integral part of the school site program. Figure 1 depicts program evaluation, curriculum and instruction, and testing services as they operate in school district settings. While program evaluation studies, accountability reports, dissemination of research findings, textbook adoptions become district products, they are often not directly used to effect school-site or classroom reforms.

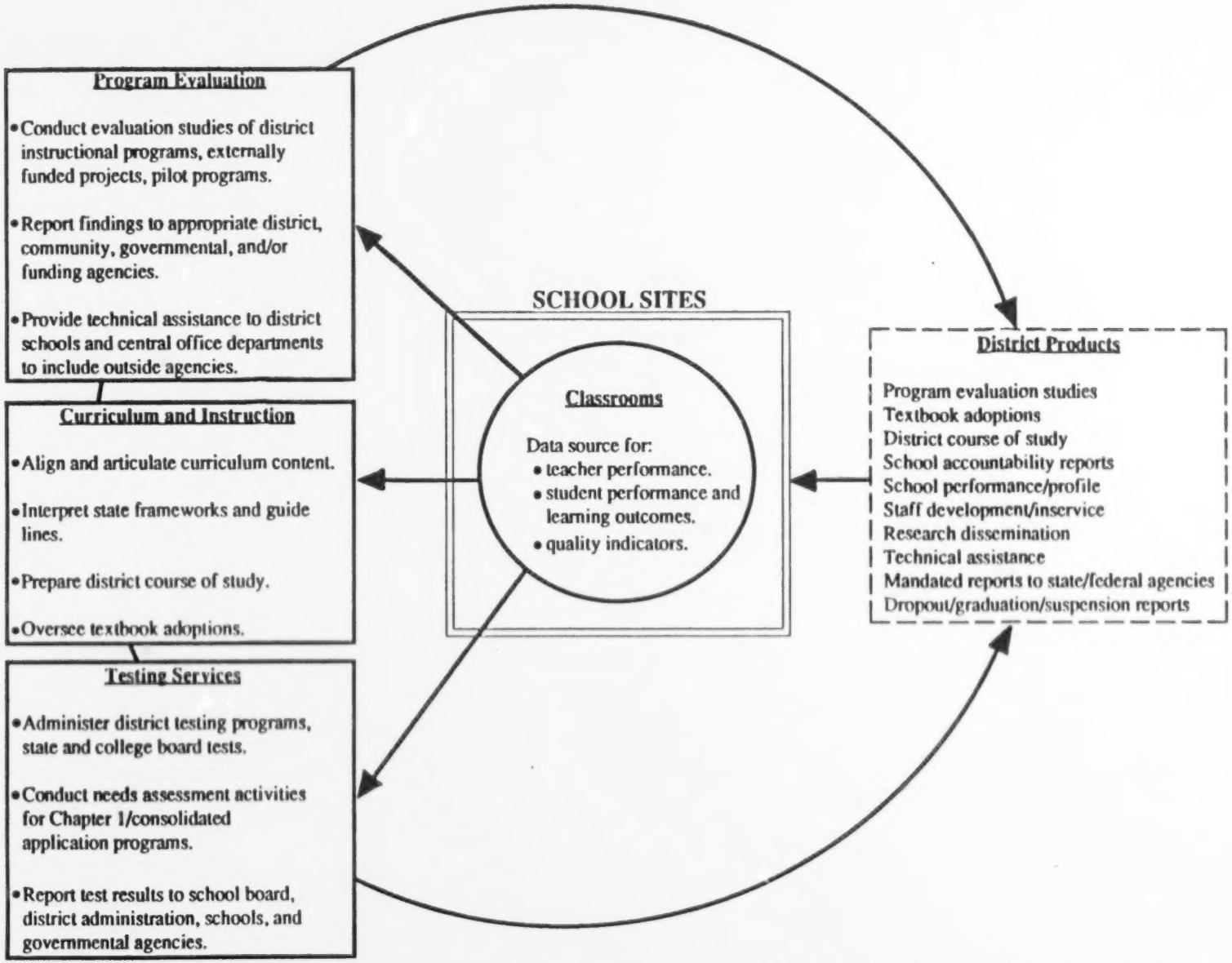
Program Evaluation
•Conduct evaluation studies of district instructional programs, externally funded projects, pilot programs.
•Report findings to appropriate district, community, governmental, and/or funding agencies.
•Provide technical assistance to district schools and central office departments to include outside agencies.
Curriculum and Instruction
•Align and articulate curriculum content.
•Interpret state frameworks and guide lines.
•Prepare district course of study.
•Oversee textbook adoptions.
Testing Services
•Administer district testing programs, state and college board tests.
•Conduct needs assessment activities for Chapter 1/consolidated application programs.
•Report test results to school board, district administration, schools, and governmental agencies.
SCHOOL SITES
Classrooms
Data source for:
• teacher performance.
• student performance and learning outcomes.
• quality indicators.
District Products
Program evaluation studies
Textbook adoptions
District course of study
School accountability reports
School performance/profile
Staff development/inservice
Research dissemination
Technical assistance
Mandated reports to state/federal agencies
Dropout/graduation/suspension reports

Figure 1: Traditional model of school district program evaluation, curriculum, and testing services.

Stimulating educational systems to make changes requires that central office departments and classrooms expand their traditional boundaries, fostering interdependence, "bridging", with each other for specific needs and resources. Implementing alternative forms of assessment means decentralizing a school district's testing program so that it becomes integrated into the daily classroom curriculum. Curricular practices, instruction, and assessment become pervasive classroom activities. Program goals, standards, definitions of successful performance, and test standards are reformulated. In this model, program evaluators, classroom teachers, curriculum and testing specialists team together to collaborate by coordinating their expertise in program planning, determining accountability measures, conducting program evaluation, and developing usable reporting systems while maintaining a climate for ongoing innovation and change.

Table 1 presents areas in which interdependence can be fostered when introducing diverse forms of assessment in a school district. Goals and objects should be stated in quantifiable terms which reflect desired outcomes and values such as higher-order thinking skills, information processing abilities, holistic learning. While accountability measures are selected to meet the informational needs of decision-making groups other than individual school sites, classroom teachers must have a central role, specifying performance tasks and criteria.

In San Diego City Schools, restructuring schools are to have "governance" or "change" teams in place to involve teachers, principals, and parents with decision-making such as those decisions pertaining to expenditures, scheduling, curriculum, and staff development and related to initiating innovation and change. The site "change" team provides a point at which central office support staff can begin to foster an interdependence with classroom teachers to create high quality programs, while addressing school accountability. Teachers teaming with central office support staff can identify data sources that best reflect values and desired outcomes, then develop test scoring systems and data collection procedures which ensure valid and reliable data. Reporting systems

are designed through collaboration so that data can be communicated back to the classroom in ways that enable teachers to improve their curricular and instructional practices.

Table 1

Areas of Interdependence with Diverse Forms of Assessment.

- Plan strategically to develop quantifiable program goals and objectives.
- Align accountability measures with valued standards, criteria, and performance tasks.
- Conduct rigorous program evaluation with a long-range perspective of at least 3-5 years.
- Re-evaluate test standards, e.g. reliability, validity, to reference new alternative assessment forms.
- Establish continuous, interactive practitioner-researcher linkages in program, curriculum, and assessment.
- Prioritize higher-order thinking skills as a desired student outcome.
- Promote holistic and interdisciplinary teaching practices across content areas.
- Conduct ongoing examination of student equity and cultural diversity concerns.
- Develop multiple reporting systems designed to address specific informational needs of diverse audiences.
- Create incentives for ongoing support and maintenance of innovation and change.

Program evaluation, curriculum, and testing services must become more interactive with teachers, collaborating to foster innovation and change. There is a greater need than ever before for the expertise and resources of program evaluation to become integral in the classroom program. In the early stages of restructuring, program evaluators should be part of the school-based planning teams developing quantifiable goals and objectives, identifying valued learning outcomes, and planning program innovations. The evaluation process should be formative allowing teachers to scrutinize, rethink, and refine their innovations and experimentation with a long-range perspective of at least three to five years.

Curriculum developers specify frameworks, standards, and criteria of instruction to match state and district instructional goals. Testing personnel assist with developing diverse assessment strategies closely aligned to the classroom curriculum which appropriately measure children's thinking skills and knowledge and they promote ownership by teachers, students, and parents in their school's accountability system. Instead of "administering" programs to all schools with the main goal of addressing the accountability needs of policy makers and external agencies, central office services focus their efforts on helping schools and/or individual teachers design ("customize") appropriate assessment systems to better instruct students and improve learning outcomes.

From a Proposal to a Working Model: Initiating Change

The model assumes that collaboration can be developed by having teams of central offices staff and classrooms teachers address the following:

- program evaluation facilitates systematically improved programs and better teacher and student performances.
- testing services assist in developing quality and comparable alternative assessment strategies.
- curriculum developers assist in adapting content and instructional practices which stimulate high quality learning.
- teachers' have flexibility in planning and experimenting with ways to improve instruction and student performance.
- data collection is a continuous part of the teaching process and diverse measures yield credible, valid data.

Figure 2 shows a collaborative model for implementing diversified forms of assessment in the classroom setting. In the model, program evaluation, curriculum development, testing and assessment are continuous classroom activities. The collaboration of classroom teachers and central office support services begins

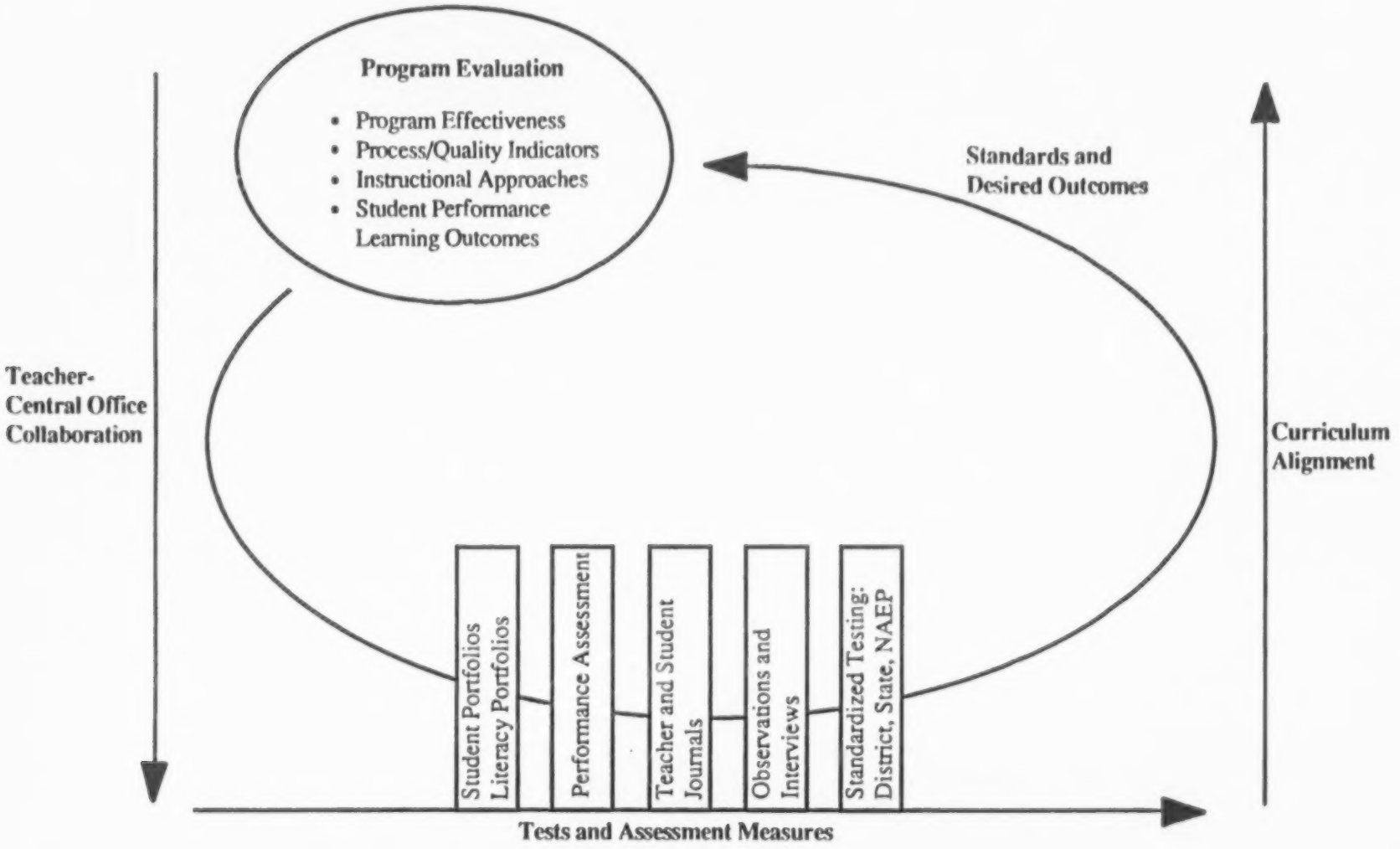

Figure 2: Collaborative model to implement diversified forms of assessment.

as they specify valued learning standards and desired outcomes, merging their respective expertise and performing each activity in a true collaborative sense.

Program evaluation is viewed as the mainspring activity in the model. The role of the evaluator on the site "change" team is to guide strategic planning by helping classroom teachers to articulate goals and objectives and select which forms of assessment are best suited to yield pertinent information. The evaluator helps classroom teachers to select data sources that can provide a strong program description such as teacher and student journals, observations, interviews, as well as appropriate performance indicators such as standardized achievement tests, portfolios, and performance-based assessments. The aim in evaluation is that testing and assessment become diagnostic tools used in curriculum development and alignment and to evoke high quality teaching and learning.

While standards and desired outcomes address districtwide instructional goals, at the same time, they are customized to reflect classroom teachers goals based on students' needs. Rather than a single criterion to measure success as is occurring with the centralized accountability system, program evaluation becomes more closely aligned to a school site's "change" team process. Standards and goals reflect a vision around which curricula are developed and instructional practices selected. Diverse assessment strategies are determined as indicators which can be used for program evaluation and accountability, and, at the same time, fine-tune and align curricular practices so students learn valued skills.

Diversified forms of assessment provide teachers, school principals, and local districts with a variety of options for accountability in addition to more traditional measures. Data collection becomes a systematic, ongoing activity, involving those most affected by results--teachers and students. District staff with individual classroom teachers in the central role select from among multiple sources such as student portfolios, performance-based assessments, teacher and student journals, observations,

interviews, and standardized measures--those data which most accurately tell them want they need to know about student and teacher performance. Data collection procedures and scoring systems are developed to ensure standards for validity and reliability are met.

Program evaluation and curriculum alignment have a responsibility, in this model, to merge their respective expertise and service in order to address the following goals:

- o Increase compatibility between classroom environment, curriculum, and school accountability.
- o Integrate basic skills across curriculum content areas.
- o Develop curriculum and instructional strategies that promote higher-order cognitive skills, reflective thinking, and cooperation.
- o Utilize educational technologies.
- o Expand teachers role as researchers and assessors in the evaluation/accountability process.
- o Generate quantifiable data (reliable, valid, reportable).
- o Establish feedback loop between central offices and classrooms in shared decision-making and reforms.

The concept of successful collaboration outlined between evaluation, curriculum, and testing services, and between those delivering these services and the schools themselves, challenges all of these currently separately conceived units to restructure. The rationale for such collaboration comes from the district restructuring impetus already in place and driven in part by educational curricular and instructional reform. The intrinsic interdependence of these separate units, are free to interact when encouraged to do so. Current restructuring efforts may provide just the right incentive and vehicle.

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